

5. Transportation

Transportation systems have played a major role in the history and development of Cumberland. Situated on the Potomac River at a natural gateway through the mountains, Cumberland prospered in its early years as a major transportation hub. The development of the National Road, the country's first federally funded public works project, began in Cumberland in 1811 and reached Wheeling, West Virginia by 1818. Cumberland's transportation system evolved around the C&O Canal and burgeoning rail lines, shaped by the natural setting of the mountains, Potomac River, and Wills Creek. The demise of the C&O Canal and decreased reliance on rail transportation in the twentieth century contributed to a decline in population and economic growth in both Cumberland and the surrounding region. More recently, completion of Interstate 68 (I-68) has improved connections to outside regions including the Baltimore/Washington metropolitan area to the east, Harrisburg to the northeast, and Pittsburgh to the northwest.

Roadway System

Cumberland's roadway system consists of a series of interconnected grids defined by natural and man-made barriers including steep slopes, the Potomac River, Wills Creek, rail lines, and I-68. Originally developed for a larger population than currently lives in Cumberland, the overall system is generally adequate to accommodate existing levels of traffic. However, bottlenecks can develop at the points of connection between local grids and crosstown circulation is seldom direct and often complicated.

For planning purposes, streets and highways in Cumberland are classified into the following four functional categories:

- **Freeways** are limited access roadways connecting cities and major urban/metropolitan areas. I-68 is the City's only freeway.
- Designed for large traffic volumes and moderate to high speed travel, **arterials** provide access between major parts of counties and through and around cities, towns, and major activity centers. Industrial Boulevard, Bedford/Frederick Streets, and Greene Street are examples of arterials in Cumberland.
- Designed to carry moderate volumes of traffic, **collector roads** provide connections between arterials and link residential neighborhoods to each other and to arterials. Oldtown Road, Virginia Avenue, and Fayette Avenue are examples of collector roads in Cumberland.
- **Local roads** provide direct access to abutting properties and channel local traffic to collector streets. They are designed for smaller traffic volumes and lower speeds. The majority of streets in Cumberland are classified as local roads.

The pattern of freeways, arterials, collector roads, and local roads in Cumberland is shown on the Transportation Plan (Figure 9).

An adequate vehicular circulation system is an important element in positioning Cumberland as a desirable place to live, visit, and build a business. From the standpoint of commercial enterprise, areas targeted for economic development activity require adequate access to allow businesses to start up and develop. From the standpoint of tourism, traffic circulation improvements are needed to make it easier for visitors to reach major attractions and destinations. Finally, maintaining and improving the quality of life depends upon meeting the mobility needs of City residents.

The ability of the existing road system to meet traffic demands in the City can be evaluated by comparing average daily traffic volumes to the available roadway capacity. In the past, the City's road network accommodated higher traffic volumes as a result of historically higher number of residents. Although the population decline has been accompanied by an increase in the number of registered vehicles since 1970, substantial road improvements have been made during that time. Today, the average daily traffic volumes in the City are generally consistent with the classification system identified on the Transportation Plan. Most of the increases in traffic have occurred on roadways with the most capacity to accommodate growth. As demonstrated by the examples in Table 2, the growth in traffic volumes throughout the City has been low to moderate (with the exception of I-68, which has seen a major increase in traffic since 1991 due to being upgraded to interstate status).

Table 2. Comparison of 1979, 1993, and 2002 Average Daily Traffic Volumes

Roadway	1979 Daily Vehicles	1993 Daily Vehicles	2002 Daily Vehicles	Percent Change, 1979 To 2002
I-68 (Freeway)	17,700	28,450	40,125	+127%
US 220 (Arterial)	9,800	12,900	13,775	+32%
Bedford Rd. (Arterial)	5,775	5,800	5,350	-1%
N. Centre St. (Collector)	5,775	8,390 ¹	N/A	N/A
Canal Parkway	N/A	N/A	10,975	N/A

Sources: 1979 Cumberland Traffic Safety Study; Maryland SHA; the RBA Group, "Closing of Johnson Street at US 40," Draft Study, 1987

Several issues associated with vehicular access and circulation have been identified as particularly important. These issues include:

1. Improving vehicular access and circulation in the downtown.
2. Improving traffic flow and safety on I-68 through Cumberland.
3. Improving problem intersections.

¹ 1990 volume.

Downtown Access and Circulation: Efficient vehicular circulation in downtown Cumberland is hampered by a confusing network of one-way streets that extend in several directions, rather than following the traditional north-south/east-west grid typical of many cities. The focal point of the circulation problems is the I-68 interchange at the end of Industrial Boulevard. The freeway connects directly to local roads (some of which are one-way streets) rather than to arterials in this location, making it more difficult to access points of interest.

The natural and man-made barriers surrounding the downtown (i.e., Wills Creek, the I-68 viaduct, and the CSX tracks) compound the problem of circulation and access to the rest of the City. Specifically, access to the east of the downtown is provided by only one at-grade and one bridge crossing of the CSX tracks and Queen City Drive (Baltimore Street/Baltimore Avenue and Bedford Street/Frederick Street). To the west, the Baltimore Street bridge is the only major crossing of Wills Creek from downtown Cumberland. All three of these locations have been identified as problem intersections.

Issue:

- Vehicular access to and circulation within the downtown is difficult, particularly for out-of-town visitors, a situation that is expected to be exacerbated by increased visitation generated by Canal Place and focusing on the Western Maryland Station. The City addressed this issue in the Downtown Design and Development Plan, prepared by the Faux Group in 1998, which included recommendations (coordinated signage program, intersection improvements, etc.) to enhance vehicular circulation in the downtown.

Interstate 68: The completion of I-68 in 1991 greatly increased traffic through Cumberland, providing a major potential source of visitation to the City. However, the segment of I-68 through Cumberland was built in the 1960s with closely spaced interchanges, narrow shoulders, and horizontal and vertical alignments that do not meet current highway design standards. Moreover, the exit/entrance ramps connecting I-68 with Cumberland's downtown create considerable confusion for visitors.

In response to concerns regarding the safety and operational characteristics of I-68, in 1992 the Maryland SHA conducted an evaluation of bypass alternatives, including a central route close to (south of) the downtown and Washington Street and a route north of Cumberland. However, the cost as well as the environmental and other impacts (e.g., diverting traffic away from the downtown and Canal Place) make it extremely unlikely that a bypass will ever be built and there are no current plans to do so. Given the expected 10 to 15 year life expectancy of the existing I-68 viaduct through Cumberland, the 1992 report recommended implementation of some interim safety improvements.

Issues:

- I-68 through Cumberland does not meet current highway design standards and is in need of improvements to address safety issues. In addition, it is likely that some capacity improvements will be required as traffic volumes continue to increase.
- As noted under "Downtown Access and Circulation," the existing downtown interchange on I-68 is in need of improvements to facilitate circulation and reduce confusion for visitors.

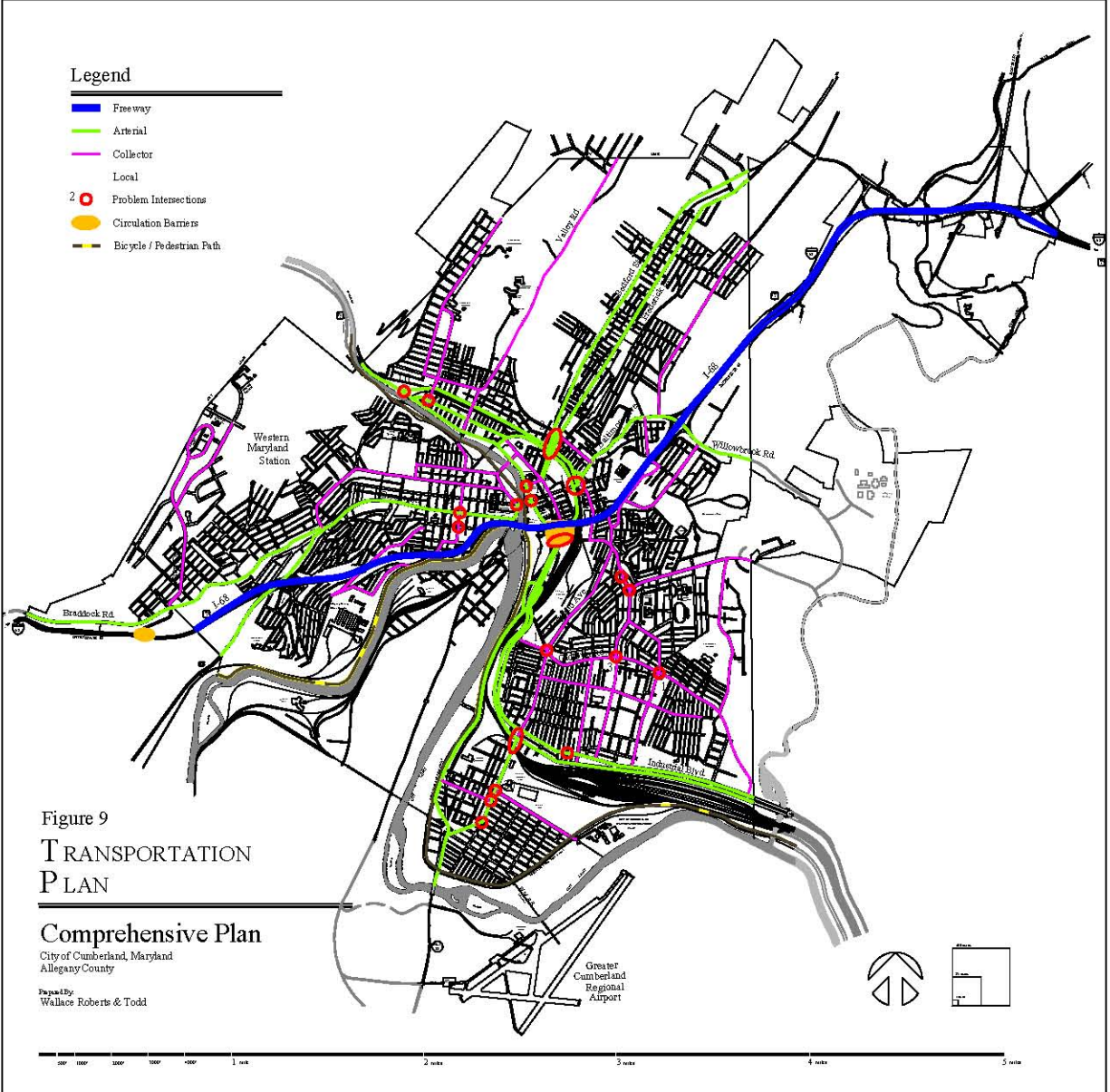
- The interchange of I-68 with Seton Drive, the collector road providing access to Sacred Heart Hospital, is a partial one serving westbound exiting traffic only. Access to the hospital would be improved by upgrading this interchange.

Problem Intersections: Because the roadway system was largely established prior to modern design standards, problem intersections occur throughout the older parts of the City. Issues at these intersections include poor visibility, awkward geometry, narrow street widths, and lack of traffic control devices. Twenty such intersections were noted in the 1996 Comprehensive Plan, primarily based upon a Traffic Safety Study completed in 1979. Although plans or improvements have been undertaken for some of the intersections since 1996, for the most part the same issues remain prevalent. Problem intersections are shown on the Transportation Plan with the following numbers (not listed in order of priority):

1. Baltimore Street/Baltimore Avenue at Front Street/Queen City Drive
2. Bedford Street/Frederick Street bridges over Queen City Drive
3. Greene Street at Cumberland Street/Washington Street
4. Greene Street at South Lee Street
5. Industrial Boulevard at Pennsylvania Avenue
6. Industrial Boulevard at Winston Street
7. Louisiana Avenue at Sheridan Place/Williams Street
8. Louisiana Avenue at Williams Avenue
9. North Centre Street at Franklin Street
10. North Mechanic Street at Baltimore Street
11. North Mechanic Street at Bedford Street/Frederick Street
12. Oldtown Road at Blackiston Avenue/Edgevale Avenue
13. Oldtown Road at Louisiana Avenue/Wempe Drive
14. Oldtown Road at South Maryland Avenue/Virginia Avenue²
15. South Lee Street at Paca Street
16. U.S Alternate Route 40 at Henderson Avenue
17. Virginia Avenue at CSX overpass/Industrial Boulevard
18. Virginia Avenue at Elder Street (following completion of Canal Parkway)
19. Virginia Avenue at Mary Street/River Avenue
20. Virginia Avenue at Offut Street

Issue: • Building on the programmed Oldtown Road/South Maryland Avenue/Virginia Avenue improvements, a long-term program should be developed to prioritize problem intersections and identify and implement feasible improvements. The identified problem intersections should be monitored/maintained on a more frequent basis to address low cost safety enhancements such as signage, striping, and signal timing.

² Programmed for upgrading as part of a multi-phased project to improve access to the Rolling Mill area as recommended in the 1996 Comprehensive Plan.



Parking

Most of the public (paid) parking supply in Cumberland is managed by the Police Department. Parking consists of metered on-street spaces, surface lots, and parking garages concentrated in the downtown area. The Downtown Design and Development Plan tabulated existing public parking supply and projected five-year (2003) parking needs. The report projected an overall shortage of 447 spaces (deficit of 541 short-term spaces versus a surplus of 94 long-term spaces) in five years. While the report found the existing supply of Canal Place parking adequate to meet demand on average summer days, a potential future shortfall during weekdays was identified. The report recommended a series of strategies to meet the projected future short and long-term parking demand. Since 1998 a parking garage has been developed at 1 Frederick Street and additional improvements have been made to increase the downtown parking supply.

- Issue:*
- With the increases in parking since 1998 the overall supply appears to be adequate, although there continues to be somewhat of a public perception that in the downtown and other major districts lack adequate parking. The City is addressing this perception through signage, maps, and materials depicting the locations of available parking. Cumberland's overall parking situation should be monitored and additional solutions implemented as demand generated by Canal Place visitation and downtown revitalization activities increases.
 - The provision of an adequate parking supply is necessary for businesses in the downtown and other commercial areas in Cumberland to remain competitive. However, parking can disrupt the traditional urban pattern and affect adjacent residential neighborhoods if not carefully sited.

Public Transportation

The primary public transportation in the City of Cumberland is bus service provided by the Allegany County Transit Authority. This service is fairly extensive, consisting of five scheduled routes that reach most areas of the City and providing access to most public facilities. The bus depot is located in the South End to the west of Virginia Avenue on Lafayette Avenue. The County Transit Authority also serves LaVale, Frostburg, Lonaconing, Mt. Savage, and Cresaptown.

Medtrans and Alltrans are specialized bus systems operated by the County that supplement the main bus service. Both of these services are demand responsive and patrons must call ahead of time to schedule a personal pickup for each trip. Medtrans is used by medical patients for transport to their appointments. Riders are required to have a medical assistance card. Alltrans provides service to disabled persons who are unable to use the other buses (wheel chair dependent, etc.). This service was established in response to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Additional public transportation is provided by various social service agencies, non-profit corporations, and hospitals. These providers serve the transportation needs of special populations, including senior citizens, low income families, and the physically challenged. Some of these organizations offer door-to-door service for their clientele.

Intercity passenger bus and train service to and from Cumberland is provided by Greyhound and Amtrak, respectively. Greyhound buses pass through Cumberland daily to and from Hagerstown, Washington, and Baltimore to the east and Pittsburgh and West Virginia to the west. Daily Amtrak service is provided between Chicago, IL and Washington, DC.

- Issues:**
- Public transportation is an important community resource, especially for Cumberland's transit dependent population. The City should support efforts by Allegany County Transit Authority and Allegany County to maintain and improve existing levels of service in Cumberland.
 - Allegany County and a number of social service organizations provide transportation for residents with special mobility needs. Opportunities exist to increase efficiency and eliminate duplication of service by improving coordination among these various transportation providers.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Access

Sidewalks have been constructed along streets in most older areas of Cumberland such as the downtown, much of the North End and West Side, and Lower Cumberland east of Virginia Avenue. Areas of the City developed during the last 50 or 60 years, including suburban style development on Haystack Mountain, generally do not have sidewalks along streets. As part of a 1994 Street Conditions survey, the Engineering Department inventoried sidewalk locations and conditions City-wide. Because the maintenance of sidewalks is considered a property owner responsibility, sidewalk conditions vary greatly. The City has attempted over time to improve substandard sidewalks but this effort has been hampered by limited funding.

Cumberland's narrow urban street system and steep topography do not lend themselves well to travel by bicycle. In addition, drainage grates on some older streets are not safe for bicycles. The City does not currently have any designated bicycle ways other than the multi-use trail along the C&O Canal from Washington, DC, which presently terminates at Canal Place. This path will be extended along the Western Maryland Railroad right-of-way through the Narrows to Pittsburgh within the next two to three years as the Allegheny Highlands Trail.

The Maryland Atlas of Greenways, Water Trails and Green Infrastructure identifies a potential greenway trail west along the Potomac River from Cumberland.

- Issues:**
- Areas of Cumberland with relatively high levels of pedestrian traffic (e.g., the downtown and commercial corridors such as Virginia Avenue and North Mechanic Street/North Centre Street) have sidewalks. Although it would be desirable to construct sidewalks on all streets over time, the cost of doing so would be beyond the fiscal capability of the City.
 - Past plans have identified the need to strengthen pedestrian circulation and linkages in the downtown as a major priority. The Downtown Design and Development Plan made a series of recommendations to address this issue, emphasizing improvements (signage, streetscape linkages, visual cues, etc.) to encourage pedestrian traffic between the Baltimore Street mall and Canal Place and to available public parking areas. Progress in implementing this plan should be assessed, and the implementation of additional connections (e.g., to serve the

Arts and Cultural District as identified in the 2001 Community Legacy Five-Year Plan of Action) evaluated.

- Completion of the Allegheny Highlands Trail will position Cumberland as a hub on a 300-mile interstate recreational trail network, providing a potentially major source of visitor spending. (Based upon current usage of the trail in places such as Ohiopyle, PA, annual visitation to the area numbering in the hundreds of thousands could be expected.) A clear connection from the terminus of the Allegheny Highlands Trail at Baltimore Street to Canal Place and the downtown is needed to maximize this potential.

Air Service

Cumberland is almost equidistant from four major airports: Washington National, Dulles International, Baltimore/Washington International, and Pittsburgh International, all of which are at least two and one-half hours by car from the City. The Cumberland Regional Airport provides local air transportation to the Cumberland area. The airport is located in West Virginia, to the south of the Potomac River, which forms the boundary between the City of Cumberland and Mineral County, West Virginia. Formerly owned by the City of Cumberland, the airport is now owned and operated by a bi-state intergovernmental airport authority comprised of four representatives from West Virginia and five from Maryland.

In the past the airport had commuter passenger service to Pittsburgh and Baltimore Washington Airports, but all such service has been eliminated.

- Issue:*
- The lack of passenger service to the Cumberland Regional Airport is a hindrance to economic development, but service is unlikely to be reinstated in the foreseeable future given the struggles of the airline industry.

Goals, Objectives, and Actions (Transportation)

Goal 4

Provide a safe and efficient transportation network, with an emphasis on improving circulation within Cumberland and connections to outside regions.

Objective 4.1

Continue to improve vehicular access and circulation for the downtown, Canal Place Preservation District, and other attractions and destinations.

Action 4.1.1

Evaluate progress made in implementing the traffic recommendations of the Downtown Design and Development Plan (see also Action 4.3.1). Update the recommendations by identifying and programming vehicular access and circulation priorities for the next five years, addressing issues such as:

- extension of the coordinated informational signage program from the downtown to gateway entrances and corridors throughout the City (see Actions 3.5.3 and 3.5.4);

- the need for improvements to I-68 interchanges with the local street system such as West Harrison Street/South Mechanic Street to improve access and reduce visitor confusion; and
- evaluation of the connection between the terminus of the Canal Parkway at Wineow Street to the downtown.

Action 4.1.2

Work with the Maryland SHA to 1) implement needed short-term safety improvements to I-68 through Cumberland 2) develop a long-range plan for improving the highway's safety and capacity that promotes access to destinations and attractions in the City and 3) update interstate signage both East and West of Cumberland to better identify exits to the City.

Action 4.1.3

Explore with the Maryland SHA the feasibility of improving the I-68/Seton Drive interchange to enhance access to Sacred Heart Hospital.

Objective 4.2

Maintain and improve traffic flow and quality of travel within the City.

Action 4.2.1

Classify streets according to their function (freeway, arterial, collector, and local) as a basis for separating local traffic from through traffic; determining priorities for improvements, maintenance, and snow removal; and establishing design standards for new street construction and improvements to existing streets. Such design standards should be sensitive to Cumberland's historic fabric and to the established urban contexts of the neighborhoods and districts through which the streets pass.

Action 4.2.2

Continue a program to prioritize and address problem intersections. Implement improvements to eliminate hazards and to make traffic flow more efficient, considering factors such as:

- relative importance in providing access to major destinations and attractions both for residents and visitors (e.g., Greene/Washington/Cumberland Street and Mechanic/Baltimore Street serving the downtown and Oldtown/South Maryland/Virginia Avenue serving the Rolling Mill site);
- given the physical constraints and costs involved in such a program, the cost effectiveness of enhancements such as minor lane reconfigurations and signal timing; and
- provision for other modes of transportation, such as pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit.

Action 4.2.3

Target street access/improvement projects based upon condition, importance to overall traffic flow in the City (e.g., the multi-phased project currently underway to improve access to the Rolling Mill area), accident history (using the Cumberland Police Department's accident database), and role in neighborhood revitalization (see also Action 7.4.2).

Objective 4.3

Provide adequate parking to serve the Canal Place Preservation District (including the downtown) and other destinations for visitors and residents.

Action 4.3.1

In coordination with Action 4.1.1, evaluate progress made in implementing the parking recommendations of the Downtown Design and Development Plan. Update the existing and projected parking supply/demand calculations as a basis for identifying and programming parking priorities for the next five years.

Action 4.3.2

Continue efforts to inform residents and visitors on the availability of parking in the downtown and other parking districts in the City.

Action 4.3.3

As part of Action 4.3.1, develop a long-range plan to provide additional parking as visitation to Canal Place increases, including consideration of remote parking opportunities (e.g., using vacant land on the west side of Wills Creek) and provision of parking for tour buses.

Action 4.3.4

In conjunction with Action 4.3.1, develop a plan to address parking needs in the Greene Street area.

Objective 4.4

Provide public transit (bus and paratransit) service to meet the mobility needs of Cumberland residents and provide alternatives to use of the automobile.

Action 4.4.1

Work with the Allegany County Transit Authority and other interested parties to improve the existing public transit system, including:

- enhancement of the current route structure;
- improvements to bus facilities (e.g., shelters, kiosks with schedules and maps); and
- public outreach to promote the benefits of utilizing public transportation.

Action 4.4.2

Work with the Allegany County Transit Authority and other providers to develop and implement a coordinated transportation plan to increase effectiveness and eliminate duplication of services among agencies that provide transportation related to employment, child care, the elderly, and special needs.

Objective 4.5

Promote pedestrian and bicycle travel as alternatives to the automobile and as a recreational activity for visitors and residents.

Action 4.5.1

Develop a strategy to target sidewalk improvements based upon condition and role in neighborhood revitalization (see also Action 7.4.2).

Action 4.5.2

Evaluate progress made in implementing the pedestrian circulation and linkages recommendations of the Downtown Design and Development Plan. Update the recommendations by identifying and programming pedestrian improvement priorities for the next five years, including improved connections from the downtown to Washington Street and to Cumberland Street as part of the Arts and Cultural District.

Action 4.5.3

Support the completion of the Allegheny Highlands Trail and efforts to develop other regional multi-use trails (e.g., a greenway trail along the Potomac River west of Cumberland as proposed by the Maryland Atlas of Greenways, Water Trails and Green Infrastructure).

Action 4.5.4

As part of Action 4.5.3, establish clearly demarcated access from the terminus of the Allegheny Highlands Trail across Baltimore Street to Canal Place and along Baltimore Street to the downtown mall. Provide bicycle parking facilities and signage to orient bikers to the City.

Action 4.5.5

Establish designated bikeways or bicycle compatible roadways where feasible as part of street reconstruction projects.

Action 4.5.6

Where feasible, improve the compatibility of streets for bicycles by replacing older drainage grates, providing wide curb lanes and/or smooth shoulders, and eliminating roadside hazards.